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**THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY** is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Soto Zen). It is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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**PLEASE NOTE.** We would like to clarify our use of the word 'He' when referring to the 'Eternal', the 'Cosmic Buddha', the 'Dharmakaya', 'Avalokiteshwara Bodhisatva' etc. Whenever 'He' is used, understand that what is meant is 'He/She/It'. We simplify our usage in this way so that the continuity of the articles is not repeatedly broken up by the form 'He/She/It', and also because we have not yet found another word which conveys the complete meaning.

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# News from the Tiger's Lair



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## '... And to the source kept true'. Part 7

Women have been scarce compared to the numbers of men in the Buddhist Sangha down the centuries; however, it should be very clearly understood that the Buddha definitely said that women had the Buddha Nature or Buddha Mind. The following is from *The Book of Eight* concerning a discourse between Ananda and the Buddha.

...Sakyan women...in due course...drew near to the Gabled Hall in Mahavana near Vesali. And Mahapajapati stood outside the door, her feet swollen and her limbs covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, sobbing and in tears.

Now the venerable Ananda saw her thus standing, with swollen feet...and in tears, and said to her: 'Wherefore, Gotamid, do you stand...sad and sorrowful...outside the door?'

'It is because, reverend Ananda, the Exalted One will not allow women to go forth from the home to the homeless life into the discipline of Dhamma, declared by the tathagata.'

'Then wait here, Gotamid, until I have asked the Exalted One to allow women to go forth from the home....'

And the venerable Ananda went unto the Exalted One and saluted and sat down at one side. So seated, he spoke thus: 'Lord, Mah-apajapati, the Gotamid, stands outside at the door, her feet swollen and her limbs covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, sobbing and in tears, saying: "The Exalted One will not allow women to go forth...."

Lord, well were it that women should be allowed to go forth from the home...into the discipline of Dhamma, declared by the tathagata!'

'Enough, Ananda, set not your heart upon the going forth of women from the home....'

*(A second and a third time Ananda besought him in like manner but the Exalted One gave the same reply.)*

Then thought the venerable Ananda: 'The Exalted One will not allow women to go forth from the home....What if I were to ask the Exalted One in another way....' And he spoke thus: 'Lord, if women go forth from the home to the homeless life into discipline of Dhamma, declared by the tathagata, can they realise the fruit of Stream-winning, of Once-returning, of Non-returning and of Arahantship?'

'They can, Ananda....'



One should understand one very important point concerning women in the Sangha and that is that, in all countries, their admission and acceptance depends not on whether or not they have the Buddha Nature, or the Buddha Mind, but rather on what is the accepted social status of women in the country where they find themselves. This was explained to me very carefully by my teachers and masters both in Malaysia and in Japan. For example, if women are kept down, as indeed they were kept down at the time of the Buddha in India, then however much their spirit, or their Buddha Mind, may be equal with that of men, they will inevitably not be accorded the status that men enjoy. At the time of the Buddha the status of women was extremely low and, although the Buddha had done much in the way of social change for the untouchables and others, helping the status of women was, I was told, too great a social change at that time; however, the fact has always been maintained that the Buddha Mind of both men and women were totally equal. All you have to do is read the 'Raihaitokuzui' in the *Shobogenzo* of Dogen and, of course, his famous quotation in the *Shushogi*: 'A little girl of seven even may be the teacher of the four classes of Buddhists and the mother of True Compassion to all living things. One of the greatest teachings of Buddhism is its insistence upon the complete equality of the sexes.'<sup>2</sup>

I quote here most of the 'Raihaitokuzui' which proves my point and needs no explanation. It was written in 1240:

However, foolish people who have never heard the Buddhist Dharma consider themselves great bhikkus and refuse to make prostrations to young people who have attained the Dharma. They say, "We have practised for many years and refuse to make prostrations to those who began to study late in life and then attained the Dharma. Since we have acquired the title of master we cannot make prostrations to those without that title. We are in charge of

regulations and should not make prostrations to ordinary monks just because they have attained the Dharma; we are senior priests and cannot make prostrations to laymen or women who have attained the Dharma. We are like the three sages and ten saints so we should not be required to make prostrations to nuns who have attained the Dharma. We are descendants of the Imperial family and will not make prostrations to ministers or retainers even if they have attained the Dharma." Such foolish people uselessly leave their fatherland and wander through other countries and never see or hear the Buddhist Way.

Long ago, Great Master Joshu Shinsai of the T'ang Dynasty developed the resolve for enlightenment and began a pilgrimage. He said, "I will ask instruction from anyone with superior knowledge even if he is a child of seven, and will not talk with anyone who is inferior even if he is a hundred. Instead I will teach him."

Asking a child of seven about the Dharma and making a prostration before him even though we are much older is very praiseworthy and the right-minded attitude of an ancient Buddha. Also, when a monk who is seeking the Way in the Buddhist brotherhood meets a nun who has attained both the Way and the Dharma and makes a prostration and asks her about the Law, it is an excellent illustration of true Buddhist study. It is like quenching a severe thirst.

Zen Master Shikan of China was a senior priest of Rinzai. The first time Rinzai saw Shikan coming he asked him to stop by. Shikan said, "All right." Rinzai said, "I was about to give you a blow but decided not to." After this, Shikan became Rinzai's



disciple. Later on, Shikan left Rinzai and went to Matsuzan [to see the nun Ryonen]. Matsuzan asked him, "Where are you from?" Shikan said, "From the road's mouth [i.e., an undefiled place." Matsuzan said, "Why don't you cover that mouth?" Shikan was unable to reply. Then he made a prostration and became her disciple.

Another time Shikan asked her, "What kind of mountain is Matsuzan?" She said, "Its peak cannot be seen." Shikan said, "What kind of people live on this mountain?" Matsuzan said, "They don't have the form of men or women." Shikan said, "Why don't you turn into a man?" She said, "I am not the spirit of a wild fox so how can I change?" Shikan prostrated himself before her, resolved to seek enlightenment from her, and studied under her for three years.

Later on, after Shikan returned to the world (as a full priest) he told his disciples, "I received a half-full ladle from that old fellow Rinzai and another half-full one from that old woman Matsuzan, making one full ladle. Now I am completely satisfied and seek nothing further." Looking back on this old story we can see that Matsuzan, a top disciple of Koan Daigu, transmitted her master's life-blood and thereby became Shikan's 'old woman.' Rinzai was the Dharma heir of Zen Master Obaku Kiun and possessed strength derived from diligent practice. That is how he became Shikan's 'old man.' 'Old man' means father, 'old woman' means mother. Shikan's prostrations and seeking of the Dharma under Matsuzan is a high-minded illustration of Buddhist practice. It is an example of a monk's integrity and the breaking down of all barriers.



The nun Myoshin was a disciple of Gyozan. Once Gyozan was looking for a suitable candidate for the monastery's administrative chief. He asked the senior experienced monks to recommend a good person. Many opinions were offered and finally Gyozan said, "The nun Myoshin from Waisu district is a woman, but she has a superior spirit and is the best qualified person for administrative chief." All agreed and Myoshin was appointed to the position. At that time there were many excellent disciples under Gyozan but no one was dissatisfied with the decision. Although her position was not the most important one, she did her best and loved others as herself.

Once she was working in the administrative quarters and seventeen monks from the Shoku district came to see her master. They wanted to climb the mountain right away but it was too late and they had to spend the night at the administrative quarters. At night they began to discuss the famous story of the sixth Patriarch and the wind and flag. All of the seventeen monks gave their respective opinions but all were off the mark. Myoshin overheard the discussion and said, "It's a pity that the seventeen donkeys have worn out so many pairs of straw sandals on pilgrimages and still cannot even dream about the Buddhist Dharma." A little later Myoshin's attendant told them what his master thought about their discussion, but none of them was dissatisfied, or resentful about it. On the contrary, they were ashamed at their lack of attainment of the Way. They straightened up their robes, offered incense, made prostrations and sought her instruction.

She said, "Please come closer." But before they could come closer she shouted,

"The wind is not moving, the flag is not moving, the mind is not moving!" When they heard that all of them reflected on their own hearts, then bowed to her in gratitude and became her disciples. Soon after that they returned to Seishu without even visiting Gyozan. Truly Myoshin's level is not surpassed by the three sages and ten saints and her actions are those of one who transmits the right stream of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.

Therefore, when present-day chief priests and top disciples lack understanding they should ask nuns who have attained the Dharma to come and instruct them. What good are elders who have not attained the Dharma?

Masters who instruct many people must have enlightened vision. Nevertheless, there are many foolish masters who are attached to body and mind and are laughed at by even worldly people, much less given recognition as interpreter's of the Buddhist Dharma. Also among lay people there are some who question the practice of making prostrations to those monks who possess the right transmission. They do not know the Buddhist Dharma, they do not study, they resemble animals, and are far from the Buddhas and Patriarchs. Yet if anyone is willing to devote his entire body and mind to the Buddhist Dharma surely the Dharma will give him help. Even fools in heaven and earth can recognize true sincerity. Can it be possible for the True Law of all the Buddhas to fail to establish harmony among all things? Even soil, sand, and stones possess the ability to feel sincerity.

In present-day temples in Sung Dynasty China there are nuns who have become famous



for their practice and attainment of the Dharma. They are appointed masters of famous monasteries at the Emperor's request and give many lectures in the Dharma Hall. The chief priest and all the other monks assemble in the Dharma Hall and listen to their proclamation of the Law. The question and answer session will be conducted in the manner of bhikkus. That is an established practice. After someone has attained the Dharma, i.e., become a true ancient Buddha, we should not think about past meetings with that person [before he became an ancient Buddha]. When we meet that person [after his enlightenment] it is on special and new ground and we should only think about the new circumstances. That is why a nun who transmits the Eye and Treasury of the True Law and has been honoured and instructed by arhats and the three sages and ten saints should receive our prostrations. What makes you noble just because you are a man?

After all, universal emptiness is universal emptiness, the four elements are the four elements, and the five skandhas are the five skandhas; women are the same----attaining the Way can be accomplished by both men and women. Moreover, we must equally respect both attainments of the Dharma. Do not be concerned with the differences between men and women. This is a basic principle of the supreme and wonderful Buddhist Way. In China there are also laymen who have not renounced the world yet still devote themselves to Buddhism. There are single people and couples living in huts practising clean and pure lives in the midst of the dirt and pain of this world. Yet all of these people are trying to clarify the same things as masters who have become monks and gathered together to study,

make prostrations, and receive instruction. It makes no difference if they are men, women, or beasts. Those who have not seen the Dharma even in their dreams---and this includes hundred-year-old bhikkus---cannot surpass laymen or women who have attained the Dharma. Still they simply bow to them as a host bows to his guest.

Anyone who practises and attains the Buddhist Dharma, even a girl of seven, will be the leader and compassionate father of all monks, nuns, lay people and sentient beings. In [the *Lotus Sutra*] the daughter of a dragon king became Buddha. She should be venerated, honoured, and respected like all the Buddhas and Tathagatas. This is the ancient practice of the Buddhist Way. Those who do not know this and lack the right transmission are to be greatly pitied.

*Written on one bright day in March, 1240,  
at Kannondori-Koshohorinji.<sup>2</sup>*

The fact that women are called nuns, a term which implies inferiority of status, is due to the use of a Christian word rather than an actual Buddhist one. *Bhikku* means a male monastic member of the Sangha; the suffix *ni* added to this word simply means female: in Japanese the *Osho* means priest whilst *niOsho* means female priest. We here use the term priest for both, as my master taught me to, to avoid the implication of inferiority implied by the term nun.

Another clear quotation concerning women is to be found in the teachings of Bankei.

And while we're on the subject of women's Buddha-minds, I know there are many women who are deeply troubled by the people who say that they're cut off from Buddhahood just because they're women. Nothing could be further from the truth. I'm



addressing the women here now, so listen carefully. How could women be any different from men in this? Men are Buddha-beings. Women are too. You needn't doubt it for a moment. Once you've got the principle of this Unborn fixed in your minds, you're Unborn whether you're a man or woman. Men and women are not the same in appearance. We all know that. But there's not a whisker of difference between them when it comes to their Buddha-minds. So don't be deluded by outward appearances.

Here's something that will prove to you that the Buddha-mind is the same in men and women. There are a lot of people gathered here. Now suppose that outside the temple walls someone started to beat on a drum or strike a bell. When you heard those sounds, would the women here mistake the drumbeat for the bell, or the bell for the drumbeat? No. As far as hearing those sounds is concerned, no difference exists between the men and women. It's not only true of men and women, there are people of all kinds in this hall: old people and young, priests and laity, and so on. But there wouldn't be any difference in the way that a young person, or a monk, or a layman heard the sounds either. The place in which there's no difference is the Unborn, the Buddha-mind, and it's perfectly equal and absolutely the same in each of you. When we say "This is a man" or "This is a woman," those are designations that result from the arising of thought. They come afterward. At the place of the Unborn, before the thought arises, attributes such as "man" or "woman" don't even exist. That should make it clear that there's no distinction between men's Buddha-minds and women's. There's no reason, then, to doubt about women having Buddha-minds.

You see, you are always unborn. You go along living in the Buddha-mind quite unconscious of being a man or woman. But while you're doing that, perhaps you'll happen to see or hear something that bothers you, perhaps someone will make a nasty remark about you, saying they don't like you, or whatever. You let your mind fasten onto that, you begin to fret over it, and thoughts crowd into your mind. You may feel that you want something, or you may feel unhappy, and yet if you don't allow this to lead you astray, into thinking it can't be helped *because you're only a woman*, then you will be able to gain a strong confirmation of the Unborn. Then you yourself are a Buddha, of the same substance not only as other men and women but also as all Buddhas of the past and future. So there are no grounds whatsoever for saying women can't become Buddhas. If they really couldn't, now what would I gain by going around lying to everyone? I'd be wilfully deluding you. If I was guilty of that, I'd be the very first candidate for hell. I struggled very hard, right from the time I was a little boy, just because I wanted to become a Buddha. Now do you think I want to fall into hell at this point for making up lies? All I've been telling you is unvarnished truth. So listen carefully, ladies. Give me your undivided attention, and you'll be able to put your minds at rest.

This subject reminds me of something that happened last year when I was in Bizen to give a sermon. Among the people who attended was a party of four or five people, including a couple of women, who came from a place called Niwase [now in the city of Okayama] in the Bitchu area. One of the women sent word to me that she wished to ask me something. She didn't feel it was



right for a woman to raise questions during the sermon itself, so she wanted to know if it would be possible to ask her questions in private.

I gladly agreed, and sometime later she arrived with three or four others. We introduced ourselves, and then the woman said: "I come from a place called Niwase. I'm married and lead a very average life. My husband and I have no children of our own, but by my husband's former wife there is a son whom I've raised. Now that he's grown, he treats me with the same consideration he would show a real mother. It's just like having a son of my own, so I'm pleased with the way things have worked out.

"But there is one thing I am concerned about. I heard that a childless woman can't become a Buddha, no matter how great her desire for the Pure Land. I've asked Buddhist priests whether it was true or not. They told me it was, that women can't attain Buddhahood. So here I am. I've had the good fortune to be born a human being, yet I'm cut off from Buddhahood. I can't help feeling that gaining human form was meaningless after all. I deplore my bad luck in being born as a woman. It's made me sick pining over it. As you can see, I've wasted away to skin and bone. I'd been longing so much to find a great priest such as you who could answer this question for me. I was overjoyed to hear that you would be coming here to give some talks. It was a reply to my prayers. Now, at long last, I'll be able to find out if it's true what I've always heard about childless women being incapable of attaining Buddhahood."

The people with her spoke up: "It's just

as she says. The idea that childless women can't become Buddhas has been tormenting her ever since she heard about it. It worries her day and night. She hasn't really been well for several years now. She has wasted away to a shadow. There must be many childless women in the world, but surely none is more concerned about her future existence than she is. She thinks of nothing else. You can see for yourself how troubled she is."

I'm glad that today's talk gave me an opportunity to tell you this story. What I said to that woman is just what I say to people everywhere I go. It's the same thing that I've been telling you, so listen carefully. To prove to her that people without children can become Buddhas, I cited the fact that in all the generations of Zen masters, beginning with the first patriarch Bodhidharma and continuing right up until myself, there has never been a single one of us who had children. I asked if she had ever heard that Bodhidharma or any of the others had fallen into hell. She said that although we didn't have any children, she didn't believe it possible for people like us---she said we were Buddhas---to fall into hell no matter what we did.

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that the minds of childless women work differently from those of other people? You have a Buddha-mind, regardless of your sex. When you hear the sound of a bell, there's no difference in the way that Buddhas, patriarchs, me, you, or anyone else hears it. If you really want to be born as a Buddha, you can. Anyone who says you can't is wrong. It's as simple as that."

"Your words are reassuring," she said,



"but it's still hard for me to forget all that talk about women being barred from Buddhahood."

"But just think of all the women who have become Buddhas since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. Haven't you heard about King Prasenajit's daughter Srimala? Or the eight-year-old Naga maiden? In China, there was Ling-chao, the daughter of Layman P'ang. In Japan, there was Taima Chujo-hime. All of them became Buddhas. So who is there to say that you can't?"

That convinced her. "You don't know how glad I am to hear that," she said. "You've rid me of doubts that have been tormenting me for years."

She stayed on for a while in Bizen and attended my talks. Her appetite returned to normal and her spirits picked up. Her companions were all amazed and overjoyed to see her back to her old self. Isn't it remarkable how such an aspiration awakened in a woman and became the central concern in her life? That's why I told you her story. I want you to have that same kind of aspiration in your minds too.<sup>4</sup>

One should understand that the situation of women, as I said earlier, depends, quite unreasonably and totally, on the way in which women are treated and viewed socially in any particular country. Because of this, in the early part of this millenium, women went all the way as Zen masters in Japan. In the sixteen hundreds the Tokugawas put them down to such an extent that it was not until World War II that their status in religion began again to rise. As I understand it, it was not until the late 'forties or 'fifties that women were again admitted to Transmission in the Soto Zen Church. If I am to keep true to the source, what I must do is follow the teaching of my own line.

Leaving out of count the social status of women in India or Japan or any other country, one must look clearly at the teachings down the centuries concerning women. The Buddha Himself admitted that women had the Buddha Nature and their meditation was just as good as that of anyone else. Just as the Buddha is, so is Dogen Zenji: he is our line; remember that even a little girl of seven can be the mother of all Buddhas. Look at Bankei; consider all of these things; all of these are true masters, they kept true to the source.

There has never been an argument that women did not have equal Buddha Nature, equal ability in spiritual development: this has never been in question. What has been in question was how men were to treat them. What we have here, then, is a social, not a spiritual, problem. Koho Zenji understood this well and made it very clear to me, when I was in the Far East, that since it was a social problem it was for me and others to do something about it. If the Buddha Himself had said that women could not make it spiritually, then we would have had a very different situation on our hands; but He did not say that: He made it very, very clear that they not only could make it but that they would make it. Dogen fills this out; Bankei fills it out even more; and Koho Zenji confirmed it by taking me into an all-male temple. I do not propose to get involved in discussing the horrors that I was subjected to in that all-male temple because of the opinions of some on the social status of women and the fact that Japan had been an enemy country to my own shortly before my arrival in the Far East; that would be to waste time and to discuss matters that really are not relevant. The prejudices of men are of no importance: what matters is that one stays true to the source. The source is the Buddha; the source is Dogen; the source is Bankei; the source is Koho Zenji. 'A thousand Buddhas stand in one straight line,' it is said, and these teach the Truth. They all lived in different social times and thus the treatment of women has see-sawed back and forth but they all kept true to the source and recognised women's spirituality.

The *Scripture of Kanzeon Bosatsu* speaks clearly, 'If it is good for Kanzeon to appear as a man or a woman, a youth or a maiden, an animal or even a demon, then Kanzeon will manifest in that shape and form to teach the Dharma.'<sup>5</sup> One should know that the form of male or female has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Buddha Nature. In many ways women are much more fortunate than are men, as Bankei points out:

Women are unlike men in being quite straightforward about things. They may be somewhat more frivolous than men in their basic dispositions, yet when you tell them that they will go to hell if they do something evil, they understand it right away, without any skepticism. And when you tell them they will become Buddhas if they do good, their thoughts turn singlemindedly to becoming Buddhas---and their attainment of faith is all the deeper. When they hear my teaching of the Unborn and come to be convinced of it, women in their simple directness are the ones that become Buddhas, rather than men with their shrewd intellectuality.<sup>6</sup>

What women actually have to overcome in the Sangha are social pressures, the fears of their male counterparts and, unfortunately, in some cases downright bigotry. For example, in recent years we have seen the Anglican Church in America admit women to its priesthood. The Anglican Church, of course, is fully in communion with the Church of England and, when women were admitted to the priesthood, the Church of England was suddenly faced with the fact that there were women in America, in a church that was in communion with them, who were priests. The matter was brought up and discussed by the English church and the following statement was issued: 'There is absolutely nothing wrong with ordaining women to the priesthood; we just do not intend to do it.' And, I suppose, if you are going to be a bigot there is nothing like being straightforward about it!



Going back to our own church, however, one has to realise that, because in many ways Buddhism is much more straightforward and much more honest than is Christianity with regard to the treatment of women, one finds what to some is an alarming difference in the way they are treated from one country to another. In Japan, at the present time, women are Roshis and they run their own temples in many of the schools; in others they do not. In Theravada Buddhism there are no women officially members of the priesthood because it is said that their Order had actually died out. In England we have both Theravada and Mahayana members of the priesthood as we do here in America but even among those of the same school there are sometimes wide divergences in behaviour. Whilst in Malaysia, I frequently lectured at temples of both the Theravadin and Mahayanist schools. The picture shown opposite (top) is of me lecturing at the Theravada temple known as Jalan Bricklands in Kuala Lumpur; on my left sits Rev. Dhammananda, the Abbot of the temple and head of all Theravadins in Malaysia, whilst several of his monks are on the other side of me. Whilst one can make no certain determination as to how a woman will be treated in any temple, the fact does remain that, when she is in a temple where converts to Buddhism are in greater numbers than those born into Buddhism, she tends to be treated rather badly. There used to be an old saying when I was young: 'If you are converted to Catholicism, you try to out-pope the Pope.' It would seem that the way in which Westerners who have been converted to Theravada Buddhism treat women whenever they meet them is much worse than the way in which those born into it do. Here in this picture I, together with Rev. Dhammananda and some of his monks, are all on the same level and they are listening to a woman preaching. I am told that when a female priest turned up at a large celebration in England, together with a male priest, she was told she could not sit on the platform with the men. I do not doubt one could find other Theravadins in the Far East who would be as bigoted, or as scared---whichever way you like to look at it---as these. I do not doubt that in the least; however, these rules are not meant to constantly imply



that the Buddha Nature of one is better or worse than the Buddha Nature of another for this is to get us into duality whilst the teachings of the Buddha maintain the importance of the Sangha avoiding duality; we need to remember this.

I am true to the source for this is what my line has taught. What the social situation is in a country may colour the treatment of women but it cannot, will not, and shall not make it impossible for them to believe truly that they have the Buddha Mind and can be priests. Far too many people far greater than I have made this statement and I agree with them wholeheartedly for I have found it true for myself and I have proved it true for myself, and anyone who ever reads the *Lotus Blossom* knows that I have made it true for myself and that it has been confirmed by the masters of Soji-ji.

\* \* \*

#### Notes

(N.B. Parts V and VI of this series, 'And to the source kept true,' will appear in due course. -ed.)

1. E.M. Hare, trans., *The Book of the Gradual Sayings [Anguttara-Nikaya]*, (London: Pali Text Society, 1978), Vol. IV, pp. 182-3.
2. Great Master Dogen, 'Shushogi' [What is Truly Meant by Training and Enlightenment] in Roshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life*, 3rd. ed. rev. (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 159.
3. Great Master Dogen, 'Raihaitokuzui' [Making a prostration and attaining the marrow], *Shobogenzo [The Eye and Treasury of the True Law]*, trans. Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens et al., 4 vols (Tokyo: Nakayama Shobo, 1975-83), Vol. 2, pp. 159-62. This important chapter from Dogen's *Shobogenzo* is well worth careful study. -ed.
4. Norman Waddell, trans., *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei 1622-1693* (San Francis-



co: North Point Press, 1984), pp. 87-91. An excellent book on this great master which any serious student of Zen will find rewarding. -ed.

5. See 'The All-Sidedness of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World,' in *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* [Innumerable Meanings, The Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law, & Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue], trans. Kato, Tamura, Miyasaka et al. (New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill Inc. & Kosei Publishing Co., 1975), p. 322.

6. Waddell, *The Unborn*, p. 95.

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# Some Impressions (After the Ten Precepts Retreat)

Angela McGrath

The han sounds, calling us to look within. Choices....there always seems to be a conscious decision to go forward in training, always going on.

At the Priory the Way seems clear and bright; everything pointing toward the Eternal. But in the world, one has to learn that 'anything may teach, however infinitesimally small, however large, no matter what...' Sometimes this lesson seems a hard one to learn.

It is perhaps difficult not to look to the Priory as a refuge from the world, as if it were apart, as if we could only find what we search for outside of ourselves instead of carrying it with us always, in our hearts.

Always be ready to answer the call of the Eternal. I try to remember this as I struggle with a vice and a bent fork during working meditation! I had hoped to be out in the garden. Next day I find myself in the garden, but up to my ankles in mud and being pelted with hailstones! Everything teaches....

Tea and gentle company. Reflect within upon the koan of the bent fork. Later, a monk asking, 'Do you see?' Well, of course we do....or do we?

Wood strikes wood; we bow. All stand straight together, a million Buddhas stand in one straight line. Be still; circulate the breath with no deliberate thought. As we sit, a senior monk enters quietly and gently tends to stiff chins and wandering eye.

*Are you a monk of body or a monk of mind?*

At home: The parish church bell rings calling the faithful to prayer....causing me to reflect upon the sound of the han and my longing to be one with the Eternal.

Brass strikes brass; we bow and begin and end and begin again our meditation....

\* \* \*



# Letters

*[The following letters bring up some important topics in training and we are grateful for permission to print them here, together with Rev. Master Daishin's and Rev. Mokugen's replies]*

Dear Friend,

I write to ask for some guidance as I am very confused and unclear of the way forward.

I have been brought up in a Christian home and have been a practising Christian for about ten years... I am finding my Christian faith increasingly unsatisfying and about six months ago started becoming interested in Buddhism.

I have attended the Milton Keynes meditation group and G\_\_\_\_\_ suggested I write to you for help and teaching over what is really a question which is worrying me.

My Christian faith has taught me that only a belief in Jesus Christ, and a trust in Him alone, will ensure I go to heaven at my death and not to Eternal death (eternal separation from God). My interest in Buddhism seems contrary to this teaching and yet I feel I have to make a decision about the right way forward that is of tremendous importance for my spiritual growth. What is so difficult is that I do not know what to believe and yet I must make a decision based on facts I cannot prove.

If Christianity is the only way to reach God, it would be foolish to look elsewhere. But I have no way of proving it is the only way. If I stray from the path and find at death the Bible teaching is true, that only those who acknowledge Jesus alone as Lord

and Saviour will be saved, I have doomed myself by making the wrong decision and this thought frightens me.

If I choose to start practising Buddhism and commit myself to the Buddhist teachings, how can I be sure this is the right way forward? To spend a lifetime following the wrong teaching seems such a waste, and yet I do not know on what basis to make such an important decision.

Any help or teaching you can offer would be most welcome. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

\* \* \*

*Rev. Master Daishin's reply follows:*

Dear Mrs \_\_\_\_\_

From a Buddhist point of view, what matters is the sincerity of your actions. If you follow your own heart, being as open and honest with yourself as you can, while doing your best to cease from evil and do good for others, then the outcome will be certain progress along the path to enlightenment. The immediate problem, however, is how to overcome the fear of damnation. Whether one is a Christian or a Buddhist, one needs to find a motivation for one's spiritual path which is deeper than fear. The way towards this is by understanding one's fear with a compassionate heart. By getting to know the nature of fear, you are in a much better position to deal with it. This can be achieved by some patient work. You have already learned something about meditation and how to sit still. Each time the fear arises, whether in meditation or at other times, simply allow yourself to feel it. Contemplate its nature without trying to make it

go away and without letting yourself be pushed around by it. Once you begin to see how fear works on you, whether it is fear of damnation or any other kind of fear, then you begin to be free of it.

The purpose of inculcating fear was originally to persuade people it was in their own interests, as well as in the interests of everybody else, for them to live a moral life. Although morality is of vital importance, true religion is about going much deeper, going into the realm of faith. Ultimately, we must let go of our small selves if we wish to know what it means to be one with God. What matters is that all beings find their way to God, Truth, Enlightenment, call it what you will. In order to achieve this, whoever they are, and no matter what they believe, they all must find a way of overcoming the obstacles to unity that exist in their own being. If at death we cling to our greed and delusion, then we create a division between ourselves and God, no matter what we believe. True faith can conquer anything, but a faith based on fear is not yet true faith. Buddhism, like Christianity, recognises a power of grace---only we call it something else. You can never be worthy of grace, but you can blind yourself to its presence by believing you are unworthy. The process of training is one of learning how to open your eyes to the grace that is offered freely to all without discrimination or judgement.

Be guided by your own heart, for there is that within you which knows the True Way. Mistakes can be made so it is important to seek help and guidance to clarify your perception of what your heart is prompting you to do. But it is always of prime importance to have faith in your own heart, for that heart is not separate from the heart of all things. Everyone makes mistakes along the way, but if we have faith in ourselves, we often realise that these mistakes are the very things which show us the right direction.

In any society it can be hard to go against the mainstream, especially when you have little support



from friends and family. There are many people, monks here at the Priory and congregation members, who have had to struggle with this difficulty and have found their way through it. For many of these people, the decision did not happen at a specific time but gradually became clearer. Give yourself time; it is more important to get to the heart of the fear than finding some temporary relief.

I hope this is of some help. If you would like to write again at any time, please feel free to do so.

With best wishes,

\* \* \*

Dear Friend in the Dharma,

I hope you don't mind my writing to you, but I have a question.

I have just started subscribing to your Journal. I found the article by Rev. Master Daishin Morgan on *Dragons and Duality* very interesting indeed, particularly the picture on page 21 with Great Master Dogen riding the dragon.

I have been puzzled by the tiger at the bottom of the picture. I showed it to some Zen colleagues and they did not know of it; I am intrigued by it and was wondering if you could tell me something about it.

It may be worth printing the reply in your next issue as I expect someone else is probably as interested as myself in finding the answer.

Yours in the Dharma,

Rev. Mokugen's reply follows:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your interest in the Journal and your question concerning the symbolism of the tiger to be found at the base of the Great Master Dogen scroll.

When Great Master Dogen returned to Japan after studying in China, one of the first things he wrote was his 'Rules for Meditation.' This scripture is recited daily in the monastery as it is, to this day, an excellent description of the method and joy of meditation. It starts with Dogen's own koan, or deep spiritual question, which drove him earnestly to seek for the Truth: *Why are training and enlightenment differentiated since the Truth is universal....* In other words, if we already possess the Truth, why do we need to train? Dogen then summarises the answer to his own question: *...the separation would be as that between heaven and earth if even the slightest gap exists, FOR WHEN THE OPPOSITES ARISE, THE BUDDHA MIND IS LOST.* That is, we must always be one with the Truth and live from the stillness of the heart if we are to know true peace and gratitude.

Great Master Dogen then goes on to describe how to meditate and speaks of some of the fruits of continual practice. He states: *...This type of meditation is not something that is done in stages; it is simply the lawful gateway to carefree peace. To train and enlighten ourselves is to become thoroughly wise; the koan appears naturally in daily life. If you become thus utterly free you will be as the water wherein the dragon dwells or as the mountain whereon the tiger roams.*

The picture of Dogen with the dragon and tiger is a copy of an original scroll in a shrine dedicated to Dogen in Japan. I'm not sure if this picture is meant to be an illustration of this particular line from the 'Rules for Meditation' or not, but for me it is certainly a vivid and moving representation of Dogen's teaching.

In Buddhism, the coming together of the dragon and tiger can be seen as representing the harmonisation of body and mind. The dragon can represent the true heart or the place of peace and refuge within each of us. This is to be found when we are willing to leap beyond the opposites of judgementalism and fear. The tiger often represents the correct use of the will and fearlessness---the fact that we need to actively roll the Wheel of the Dharma by continuous practice and the keeping of the Precepts. Will, in this context, means a willingness to fearlessly follow the teaching wherever it may take us and, as Dogen states, *to cut all ties and give up everything*. This is quite different from wilfulness which can be seen as stubborn grasping fanned by the flames of greed, hate, and delusion.

When we sit in meditation we demonstrate our willingness to listen to the 'still, small, Voice within.' We demonstrate our willingness to face up to our responsibilities and karma, however painful and distressing that may be. The very act of willingness or offering allows the Water of Compassion to flow so that the cleansing waters of forgiveness, generosity, and clarity flow over not only ourselves but all beings. If we keep up the practice, *we will be as the water wherein the dragon dwells*. From this still place we *know* that which is truly good to do, and by keeping up the daily training karma is gently cleansed.

The Serene Reflection Meditation school teaches the 'backward flowing' method of meditation, the method of the harmonisation of body and mind. Briefly described, this means to simply sit still within, with an open, bright, alert, and accepting mind---neither grasping at thoughts or emotions nor pushing them away. At the start of the meditation period, and at subsequent intervals when our concentration may have elapsed, a couple of breaths are taken which follow a circular pattern. We inhale imagining the breath or energy rise up the spine from the area of the sacrum to the top of the head, and exhale allowing the 'breath' to cascade gently into the abdomen or hara region. This is a helpful reminder to drop our con-



cerns and worries and simply trust the Buddha nature within. Having reminded ourselves of our True Refuge and its ever present, ever flowing nature, we then allow ourselves to breathe naturally. The circulating of the breath two or three times is also a useful exercise for us to practise occasionally throughout the day, particularly if we find ourselves tense or distracted. The ever present stillness is then found, even in the midst of hectic daily activities.

Meditation requires effort if it is to give life and vigour to our training. Hence the will, which traditionally is said to be seated in the kidney area (here represented by the tiger) fuels the offering of open willingness to the Eternal. We are willing to bow to That which is greater than our selfish self, and put brightness into our practice. This act of giving wholeheartedly brings great peace to the heart (the true abode of the dragon) and gives us faith, energy, and courage to continue our training. When we keep the Precepts absolutely and follow the teachings of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, body and mind are one, and we know the glorious harmony of being at peace with ourselves and with the world. This is the purpose of the natural circulation of the breath in meditation. It is to put our whole life and effort in harmony with and in the service of the Eternal without impediment or resistance. This is the turning of the Wheel of the Law.

The true heart or Buddha Nature is possessed equally by all. When we practise and meditate correctly, stemming the activity of selfishness, we allow the heart to move the will---or more accurately, the heart and will move together. It becomes a joy and privilege to train and keep the Precepts, and not a daily grind which we somehow fear or resent. Therefore the dragon can ride the soaring waves, and the tiger can roam the mountains with magnificent freedom and fearlessness.

Everyone knows the joy and brightness of spirit which comes from acting from the heart of compassion

and generosity, and the dullness and pain that comes from turning away from the Precepts and the Truth. It is important not to waste the circulating, cleansing Water of the Spirit by dissipating our energies by clinging to empty pleasures and worldly greeds---we must not create the seeming separation of 'heaven' and 'earth' and so cause disharmony between the dragon and the tiger. 'Heaven' is to be found in each 'earthly' step beneath our feet if the Precepts and all acceptance are fully practised. It is important to always keep up our training lest *the opposites arise and the Buddha Mind is lost.*

I hope this helps answer your question; if you have any more, please don't hesitate to ask.

My best wishes to you and your colleagues.

In gassho,

#### Notes

1. P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity* (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 105.

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# Dependent Origination

Rev. Koshin Schomberg, M.O.B.C.

[The following article was first published in the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, Volume 4, Number 3]

## 5. Rebirth: The Lower Realms.

The next step can be expressed as follows:

*Birth depends upon becoming.*

'Becoming' refers to the inexorable necessity of the continuation of the stream of karma in which deep-seated attachment (clinging) is still present. 'Birth' is that important step in that continuation in which a new form manifests the confusion (and the merit) which is the legacy of past experiences.

In the earliest teachings of Buddhism, five realms of rebirth are described. These are divided into two higher realms and three lower realms.<sup>1</sup> All realms of rebirth are characterised by *dukkha*---suffering (or the inability of transient experience to satisfy the deepest longing of the heart.) In the lower realms, however, the consequences of past actions are experienced with a very heavy weight of suffering.

The three lower realms are the realms of animals, hells and hungry ghosts. Rebirth in these realms is the karmic consequence of volitional actions in which there is a preponderance of indulgence of the three poisons of delusion, hatred, and greed.

Rebirth in the animal realm is the consequence of indulging delusion. The chief characteristic of the animal realm is lack of intelligence and the complementary domination of instinctual drives. Within the animal realm there is continual killing and being kil-



led, and sexuality exists as an urge which is completely obsessive when it is biologically activated. The more complex animals are also more intelligent and this development of intelligence is, in spiritual terms, the capacity for a sympathy which extends beyond oneself and one's immediate family and social group. Humans who indulge the animal side of themselves---'behave like animals'---vent spiritual desperation through the outlet of lust. This is in fact a wilful directing downward and outward of spiritual energy which wishes to gather and rise to the Eternal ('offering up'). The ultimate principle of delusion, 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law,' is inevitably coupled with the glorification of animal lust and power. Its consequence is the dimming of the light of intelligence and the entry into the dark world of desperate eating and being eaten.

Rebirth in the realm of the hells is the consequence of indulging hatred. Hatred is the wish to do harm. It is the urge to cause pain and to destroy. The hells are states of unrelieved anguish, pain and despair. If in Western religion hell is everlasting separation from God, then in Buddhism, in which no such separation is in fact possible (since the Eternal is the True Reality of *all* existence,) the hells are the painful delusions that there is such separation.

Rebirth in the realm of the hungry ghosts is the consequence of indulging greeds which develop into addictions. The world of hungry ghosts is portrayed as a place in which water, which gives life and satisfies thirst, turns to fire when the hungry ghost tries to drink. The Sanskrit word *trishna*, which is usually translated as 'craving,' 'attachment' or 'greed,' literally means 'thirst.' And this metaphor of water turning to fire shows how addiction becomes a torment so that, in the very act of attempting to satisfy desire, desire increases and ruins all capacity for true satisfaction.

In Buddhism, it is said that the effect is born within the cause. That is, in the volitional act the

consequences are already to be found. I have found this to be of the utmost importance in thinking of the realms of rebirth. The lower realms can easily be viewed as realms of punishment for past sins. This view is common enough and Western people are used to thinking of Hell in such a way. Such a view is very misleading in Buddhism. It is in fact completely untrue. In Buddhism, it is much more correct to say that the realms of rebirth are the natural and inevitable revelation of the true nature of various actions.

For example, the human being who indulges animal lust and power must block out higher spiritual awareness to stay at the animal level. Rebirth in the animal realm is the natural fruition of such action---that which is wilfully blocked in the act is felt to be lost in the consequence. There is no judge who condemns anyone to such a rebirth, nor in fact is there an enduring soul or person that experiences such rebirth. There is just the flowing out of the consequence from cause. And consequence exists, *and can be seen*, within the cause. Thus we are *responsible* for all that flows forth within the stream of our karma from our volitional acts. 'Responsible' means 'able to respond,' that is, 'able to *do something*' about the state of affairs: if we do not want certain effects, we must pay attention to the attitude which embues our actions, for in that attitude the potential effects can be seen.

In the hells, the despair of imagined separation from the Eternal is a great anguish. This becomes terror, guilt, the conviction that one is unclean and damned. But where does such conviction originate? The Eternal is the reality of all existence---all beings are Buddha. The indulgence of hatred is a volitional denying of this Oneness of all existence. And so within the very act of hatred is seen the source of that conviction of separation. The consequence is simply the natural unravelling of the full implications of the cause; it is the *revealing* of what the cause *really* is (as opposed to what we *think* it is when we indulge it---so much for 'righteous' anger.)

In the world of hungry ghosts, the form of suffering is all-consuming desire: desire which cannot be satisfied. Here the revelatory nature of karmic consequence is especially clear, for the primary consequence of indulging greed is the *strengthening* of greed. The hungry ghost attitude is one of a sense of powerlessness in the face of the all-consuming passion. Indeed, addicts speak of the addiction as if it were a separate being who controls their will and life. But where did this sense of powerlessness originate? There was originally a sense of something missing, of an emptiness that seems to require filling with some experience. The *compulsive* attempt to fill that emptiness in particular ways comes with time, as the habit-energy of karma develops through repeated acts of indulgence. But this compulsive power is secondary and is revelatory of the initial sense of inadequacy.<sup>2</sup>

These lower realms are, equally with the higher ones, embodiments of Compassion. Each realm is an opportunity for training. The deepest Truth---that there is for all beings at all times the Refuge of the Eternal---is to be found within these realms. Within the dark and painful confusion of animal preoccupation with food, self-preservation and reproduction there arises the longing for the contentment, safety and light of the Eternal---the true light of intelligence. Within the anguish, fear and pain of the hells, one can develop acceptance and sympathy---the spiritual qualities through which the illusion of separateness is dissolved. Within the craving and doubt of the world of hungry ghosts one can grasp the will to begin to treat one's own body and mind with compassion, thereby finding the Eternal.

Because these realms of rebirth are not just realms of physical rebirth, but are also aspects of all karmic consequence of delusive volitional action, we do not need to look to extraordinary experience for proof that the Eternal is to be found within each of the lower realms. We need only look closely at our own experience.

In writing the above descriptions, I have used Buddhist Teaching as a guide for looking at my own experience. I have also used my observation, in the capacity of a priest, of human suffering. In the world around me I see many people who, while having human form, spend a great deal of time residing in one or more of these three evil realms. And I see individuals who, through great efforts and the power of that intuitive knowledge of the Eternal which can never be extinguished, are climbing out of the lower realms. There is something magnificent and awe-inspiring in this, and it serves as a caution to those of us with a tendency to meddle in the lives of others. People do not need others to be their saviours, for the consequences of their own actions are at all times pointing towards the Eternal. 'Thou must go alone; The Buddhas do but point the way.'<sup>3</sup>

In the next article in this series, we will look at the higher realms of rebirth.

#### Notes.

1. Later, a fourth realm, that of the *asuras*, or warring demons, was added. Originally, however, the realm of the *asuras* was part of the heavenly realm. The heavens and the human realm will be discussed in the next article in this series.

2. The realm of *asuras* can be viewed as the more active and aggressive counterpart of the realm of hungry ghosts. In both cases, the problem is one of runaway greed. In the *asuras*, the greed is lust for fame, power and wealth. The *asura* *seems* to derive power from his greed; the hungry ghost *seems* to be made powerless by his greed. The end result of obsession is in both cases the same and, not surprisingly, the two often go hand in hand.

3. As found in Roshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life*, 3rd. ed. rev. (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p.7.

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# 'In Darkness there is Light'

Sally Robertshaw

Within all light is darkness,  
But explained it cannot be by darkness that  
one-sided is alone.  
In darkness there is light,  
But, here again, by light one-sided it is  
not explained.  
Light goes with darkness  
As the sequence does of steps in walking;  
All things herein have inherent, great  
potentiality,  
Both function rest reside within.'

I find myself returning to these lines from the *Sandokai* to help me make sense of what is happening and to give me courage. This is a difficult time for me but I am learning to welcome the difficulties because of the opportunity they offer for training. When oppressed by problems in training it becomes clear there is no other refuge than the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, and that these Three Refuges are all we need. All can feel hopelessly dark and bleak, but if I take the next step and do what needs to be done as mindfully as I can, if I get up each morning to sit and then to recite the scriptures, if I make time each morning to read the *Kyōjūkaimon* before leaving for work I find that within the darkness there is light. While I am singing the *Scripture of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva*, for instance, my heart is full of light and the difficulties dissolve; I am overwhelmed with gratitude for how bright our training can be in times of darkness. I frequently remind myself of the last line of Dogen's *Rules for Meditation*.

If you do these things for some time you  
will become as herein described and then

the Treasure House will open naturally and you will enjoy it fully.<sup>2</sup>

Although the emotional pain can feel at times unbearable, I realise this is not the case and that if I call for help it is always right there. Some time ago an article appeared in the Journal called 'The Kindest Kanzeon is to be Found in Hell.'<sup>3</sup> At first I could understand it only on an intellectual level, but now I am beginning to understand with the heart. But it needs faith: faith in the compassionate nature of the Eternal so that as I leap over the edge I will, '*like the sun, remain aloft.*' Faith in myself too that I can do it, that we all can do it; we need only trust in our Buddha Nature and take the next step.

Rev. Chushin wrote in his article 'There is Always a Choice': 'By understanding the compassion of the Eternal working through the law of karma, and following its teaching in daily life, we are drawn ineluctably into enlightenment.'<sup>4</sup> I had not known what the word 'ineluctable' meant but was delighted to read it means 'against which it is useless to struggle'---this expresses exactly what I need to hear at present: that it is useless to struggle against the true longing of my heart, the 'still small Voice,' which is the Voice of the Eternal.

When the Buddha's renunciation is described little is made of the difficulties there must have been in leaving home; but if there were no difficulties, why did the Four Guardian Kings need to muffle the sound of his horse's hooves? Although it is wise not to dwell on difficulties in training but rather look to the Buddhas and Ancestors for inspiration and encouragement, at the moment it helps me to realise that leaving His family and His splendid palace could not have been easily done or lightly undertaken.

I'm also beginning to understand that it is a mistake to wish away the present time, however painful it may be, for what other time is there and at what other time can I train? Training is *now*, this very moment,

not next year when I tell myself surely life will be more comfortable. Rather than scare myself by looking ahead at all the problems that could arise, I need to concentrate on doing the very best I can in this very minute. Why then am I sometimes so obstinate and, for instance, put off going to sit on my meditation bench when I know that in the stillness of meditation I can allow the grief to arise and pass naturally away? Why then do I dither around trying, without any conviction, to keep the grief at bay? In the end, of course, wisdom wins the day and I go to my meditation bench and afterwards I feel a cleansing has taken place. I find I can look more kindly on this self-harming behaviour when I read that 'it takes an act of will to turn the stream of compassion within.'<sup>5</sup> I then remind myself that I know it takes determination and effort to 'grasp the will,' but that sometimes we dither about before we can get ourselves to do it.

I am also inclined to put off taking refuge in the Sangha; perhaps that's because as a therapist my role is to listen to other people's problems, not to talk about my own. But I've found that often help is offered without my realising I was asking for it. An example was finding the following note tucked in the seat of my meditation bench on the day I was about to leave the Priory: 'Take good care and hold fast. Let me know how you're getting on. Gassho.' True help comes out of what we take refuge in--the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. So once again I return to the *Sandokai*:

Within all light is darkness,  
But explained it cannot be by darkness that  
one-sided is alone.

In darkness there is light,  
But, here again, by light one-sided it is  
not explained.

Light goes with darkness  
As the sequence does of steps in walking;  
All things herein have inherent, great  
potentiality,  
Both function rest reside within.'

And I know for myself in the only real way there is of knowing, from one's own experience, that indeed *light goes with darkness*; and that I too have *inherent great potentiality*. I know that faith will gradually overcome fear and I will be able to give fully of myself.

#### Notes

1. P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity* (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 62.
2. Ibid., p. 107.
3. Magdalena Laser, 'The Kindest Kanzeon is to be Found in Hell,' *Journal of Throssel Hole Priory*, Vol. 13, Number 4, Winter 1986.
4. Rev. Chushin Passmore, 'There is Always a Choice,' *Journal of Throssel Hole Priory*, Vol. 14, Number 3, Autumn 1987.
5. Ibid.

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# News

**Monastic News:** We are pleased to announce that on May 6, the eighth anniversary of his ordination by Rev. Master Daishin, Rev. Edmund Cluett became a senior monk, receiving the title of *Teacher of Buddhism*. We congratulate Rev. Edmund and wish him well in his future training.

The monastery was closed to visitors from May 14-18 for the spring monastic sesshin. This proved to be a most rewarding retreat and ended with the *Abbot's Dharma Ceremony* on the last evening.

**Festivals & Ceremonies:** We were pleased to welcome forty lay guests to *The Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat*, April 9-16. The retreat began with the Reading of the Ten Precepts which (as do all the other ceremonies) emphasises the great importance of living by the Buddhist Precepts in order to become one with the Truth. On April 12, sixteen lay trainees received lay ordination: David Blake, Ralph Aldous, Mark Boyne, Jason Davies, Andrew Foster, Lorraine Fraser, Anthony Hall, Ursula Heini, Philip Heywood, Margaret Lowe, John Mallon, Douglas Morris, John O'Hara, Lucinda Scott, Richard Spencer, and Debra Swinley. We send our best wishes to these sincere trainees and pray they continue to deepen their understanding. The offertory at the end of the ceremony reminds us all of the importance of this occasion:

Now the universe rejoices, the earth trembles and the flowers fall. The Bodhisattvas of other worlds ask their Buddha what this means and the Buddha replies that a new disciple has been given the Pure, Great Precepts of the Bodhisattvas and been converted to the Truth by the Master who was given the Precepts before in the teaching of Shakyamuni who is the Buddha of this world. The disciple will become a Buddha in

the future through this merit, therefore the universe rejoices....

After the *Ceremony of Contrition and Conversion* and the *Ceremony of Following Where the Precepts as the Blood of the Buddhas Lead*, the retreat ended with the great ceremony of *Recognition* on the evening of April 15.

Also in April the community and lay guests celebrated the *Festival of Great Master Keizan* and the *Festival of Manjusri Bodhisattva*. On May 6, 30 adults and 12 children joined us for the *Festival of the Buddha's Birth (Wesak)*, always a festival of joyful gratitude and hope for the future. There was the regular *Sunday Lotus Ceremony* on June 3, followed by the *Festival of Avalokiteswara Bodhisattva* on June 17.

**Funerals & Memorials:** A memorial service for Patrick Owens took place on May 22. In June, four monks from the Priory conducted a *Purification & House Blessing* ceremony at 'Earthlore,' a newly-opened shop in Hexham.

**Priory Publicity Posters:** If anyone is interested in distributing or displaying our new posters advertising Throssel Hole Priory, would they please write to the Guestmaster ('Advertising') stating the number they could make good use of. There are two sizes: A4 & A5. Would meditation groups please co-ordinate members' requests for posters to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste.

**Congregation Day:** Congregation Day this year will be held once again in Nottingham at the Sherwood Community Centre on Saturday September 22. Please see enclosed leaflet for directions on how to get there. The day will begin at 10.00am and end at 4.00pm. The Congregation Day gives the lay sangha the chance to meet the monks informally and to express gratitude for the help and guidance received. We will celebrate the *Festival of Avalokiteswara Bodhisattva*, who is the compassionate aspect of the Eternal Buddha.

Any help or suggestions regarding this special day will be most welcome. Co-ordinator: **Mo Henderson**, Orchard Cottage, 96 Britford Lane, Salisbury, SP2 8AJ. Phone: (0722) 337997.

**Northern Groups' Day:** This was held near Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire on May 19. It was primarily intended as a social occasion where the lay sangha could come together outside a formal retreat. Over twenty adults and about a dozen children took part. Midday service marked the beginning of events, followed by an ample lunch to which all had contributed. In the afternoon, we watched two new videos about the Priory and Serene Reflection Meditation; played a board game devised by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett called *Training and Enlightenment*; and enjoyed a treasure hunt (based on events in the life of the Buddha). The day ended with tea. Everyone seemed to have had a good time and I would like to thank all those who took part and made the day such a success. *Norman Trew hitt.*

**Talks & Retreats:** Monks from the Priory continue to go out to lead retreats and give public talks. Monks have recently visited meditation group meetings in Newcastle and Lancaster to meet the members and give a short Dharma talk. We encourage groups to get together at these times (as did the Manchester and Lancaster groups in June) as this can help to strengthen the feeling of being a part of one Sangha, a feeling which is of great help in one's training.

**Books Received:** The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness. Compiled & edited by Sidney Piburn. (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1990). This is an anthology of writings by and about the Dalai Lama; it is a wide-ranging collection of articles and interviews and includes the Dalai Lama's 'Nobel Peace Prize Lecture.'

**Donations:** We are grateful for the following donations: 'Silk' artificial flowers, incense, a scroll, black material, and a vase; file tabs, a filofax and notebook; soap and bin liners; a film and several tapes; seeds, bulbs, plants, and garden tools;



scissors and various general tools; plastic containers, 'Jiffy' bags, a pressure cooker, kettle, and towels for the kitchen; and cat and dog food.

The Kitchen has also received bread, fruit and vegetables, eggs, beans and pulses, rice, nuts, and muesli; tofu and tempeh, soy sauce, seaweed, vinegar; olives, vegetable pâté, tomato purée, sunflower oil, olive oil; peanut butter, sugar, honey; sweets, cake, biscuits, tea, and chocolate; 'Caro' & 'Barley Cup,' crisps, and fruit juice. Such generosity is greatly appreciated.

**Begging Bowl:** As well as other staple food, at this time of year the Kitchen is most grateful for donations of muesli.

\* \* \*



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